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well together during the ensuing summer months, a band or two moving off by themselves to rejoin the tribe in time to prepare for whatever Sacred Dances might have been scheduled, and parties of 10, 20, 30 or more men would go off to raid the enemy. Precautions had to be taken, too, against the ever-present danger of being raided by the enemy, especially by smaller groups separated from the main tribe as they went further and further from the center of their territory in quest of game.[3]

The hides of buffalo killed during the spring and summer were used to make parfleshes, moccasin soles, lodge covers, ropes and the like. Fresh meat was usually plentiful although it was necessary to move six or eight times a summer to keep up with the buffalo, some smaller herds of which apparently remained in Montana in spite of the migration of the vast majority to the north. Meantime as the various berries, wild fruits and wild roots ripened, collecting was done whenever opportunity offered, neither tribal nor band movements being determined, so far as we are aware, by that objective, but depending almost entirely on the whereabouts of the buffalo. During August and September, the rutting season, the buffalo joined in great milling masses leaving bare the surrounding range for many miles. The buffalo then separated into smaller herds again and by October, when the Gros Ventres started their concerted fall hunt, the buffalo were in prime condition, their coats sleek and fine.

The best time for robe hunting was approximately from October 15 to November 15, but the hunt continued until all had sufficient meat dried and stored to see them through the winter. It was said that as many robes as possible were dressed with the fur on, and

[3] In this connection it is interesting to note that the old Cree, quoted by Thompson, pp. 329–30, after describing a drawn battle between the Snake and Piegan about 1730 concludes: ". . . night put an end to the battle without a scalp being taken on either side, and in those days such was the result, unless one party was more numerous than the other. The great mischief of war then, was as now [1786], by attacking and destroying small camps of 10–30 tents which are obliged to separate for hunting." Such was evidently still the case in the middle of the 19th century. Denig writes in 1854, pp. 548–50, that when the contending parties are nearly equal, little damage is done. The worst damage occurs, however, when 200 to 400 warriors surprise a camp of 20 to 30 lodges.

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mountain lion, lynx, bobcat, and otter, never served as food.

Of vegetable foods there was a variety, especially of berries and roots, many of which were gathered in large amounts and dried for winter use, either as seasoning in broths and soups, or to be mixed with grease. Currents, strawberries and raspberries were picked when ripe and only in sufficient quantities to meet daily needs. Juneberries, or service-berries, and gooseberries were dried and stored away in parfleshes. Bitterroot, wild onions and wild carrots were likewise preserved for winter use, as well as wild rhubarb stems. In July larb-berries, another name for which is bear-berries, and "plums" were ripe; and in August the choke-cherries and wild turnips were dried and pounded. In late August rose-berries were ready to eat, but were better after a touch of frost. There was no need of storing too many of these since they did not freeze and could be garnered all winter long. It is said that of all the berries and roots available, service-berries and choke-cherries, wild turnips and bitterroot, were the most important More of these were put up than of the others.

The yield of thorn-, rose- and larb-berries, of wild carrots and of wild rhubarb was always dependable. Other plants, however, were more erratic. For instance, one year there would be no chokecherries at all around Hays but plenty of them at Lodgepole, only ten miles distant; the next year the situation was as likely as not to be reversed. Moreover some plants grew only in a few localities at best. Red turnips or beet turnips, described as something like a radish, was one of those which was to be found only sporadically and in sandy places; the wild potato, another of the less common plants, grew only in the Sweet Grass Hills and in the Moccasin Mountains south of the Little Rockies, and around Billings.

Such additional foods were evidently of sufficient importance that the women occasionally ventured quite far from camp for berry-picking and root-digging expeditions, disregarding the very real danger of surprise by the enemy. That these edibles were not despised is suggested, too, by the fact that the digging-stick had a prominent place at the center pole in the Women's Lodge, although it is true that the principal concern in the rite centered about the buffalo.